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Duxbury's new Dragons den

Ribbon cutting ceremony opens new middle-high school

BY GILLIAN SMITH, EDITOR

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The sun shone brightly over the middle school entrance to the new Duxbury colocated middle-high school on Thursday, as students, parents, educators and community members gathered to celebrate the long-awaited opening of the state-of-the-art school.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Benedict Tantillo welcomed visitors to the new school, highlighting the hard work and hours of dedication it took to make the school a reality. "This new state of the art building is ready to welcome the students of Duxbury," Tantillo said. "The building project has been the culmination of many hours of visioning, marketing, planning, implementing. It was a full collaboration."

John Heinstadt, school committee chair, spoke briefly about how proud he was of the building and how he is looking forward to getting started with the school year. Representative Josh Cutler, Senator Robert Hedlund and an aide from Representative Tom Calter's office also spoke at the ceremony, all highlighting the importance of being part of a community that supports large projects that improve education. Senator Hedlund presented a group of incoming students with a citation that welcomed them to the new school. Tantillo recognized the

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work of the School Building Committee, the Massachusetts School Building Authority, former town manager Richard MacDonald, current town manager Rene Read and the selectmen. He singled out the work of Elizabeth Lewis, who volunteered her time to be at the forefront of the process from the start.

The ribbon cutting ceremony was four-fold, as the incoming class presidents had a chance to cut a ribbon, as did members of the school building committee, town officials and members of the design and construction teams. After all the ribbons were cut, eager audience members flooded the doors, anxious to find a student tour guide to take them around the school. Rising senior Isabel Foley was ready and waiting in the Middle School lobby to take a group and she set out introducing the school and the new layout. The school is set up in four blocks, with the high school as block A, the middle school as block B, the cafeteria and music area as block C and the gymnasiums as block D.

"That's to help us figure out where everything is," Foley said. "Because it's just so big."

The first stop on Foley's tour was the cafeteria, a large, bright room that can be split in two so that middle school students and high school students can enjoy their lunches separately.

After a brief walk down "Main Street," the main hallway that spans the length of the building and connects all of the "blocks," Foley's tour entered the presentation hall, which she said can hold up to 300. Behind a closed black curtain, she said, is the muchanticipated Black Box Theater. The theater is a square room that is entirely black and can be moved around and constructed to fit each individual performance.

Next up on the tour was the music wing, featuring 12 sound-proof rehearsal rooms across from a hallway of lockers for musical instruments. Farther down the hallway are the orchestra and band rooms, which have larger lockers for larger instruments.

Around the corner from the music rooms are the exercise rooms; one for middle school students and one for high school students. The rooms have equipment and machines that are ideal for athletes who are in-season.

"Those are better than the ones at my gym," one of the women on Foley's tour commented.

From there, Foley's tour walked through the high school gymnasium, which will be home to varsity volleyball and basketball games. With the new Dragons logo painted on the floor, the gym is ready for opposing teams and good competition. The academic wings of the school boast both "clean" and "dirty" science rooms, as well as Mimeo boards, which allow teachers to not only project information onto the board, but allow students to write on a tablet that then appears on a board.

"It's helpful for when we are working on math problems because we can work to solve them together," Foley said.

Each wing has collaboration areas where some classes will take place, if necessary, Foley said. The spaces will also serve as meeting areas for when all of the teams in one grade get together.

Across the hall from the academic wings is the library, which is home to a view of the Bluefish River. Many of the rooms in the new school feature large, high windows, and Foley said many of them had to be designed to be hurricaneproof.

Down the stairs and back out through the Middle School Entrance, Foley's tour is complete.

"We are really excited about the new school," she said.

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